

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences

Special Issue : LERU Position and Advice Papers 2010

Editorial

This special issue of Procedia- Social and Behavioral Sciences comprises all the position and advice papers as published by the League of European Research Universities (LERU) in 2010.

LERU was founded in 2002 as an association of research-intensive universities sharing the values of high-quality teaching in an environment of internationally competitive research. LERU is committed to: (1) education through an awareness of the frontiers of human understanding; (2) the creation of new knowledge through basic research, which is the ultimate source of innovation in society; and (3) the promotion of research across a broad front, which creates a unique capacity to reconfigure activities in response to new opportunities and problems. The purpose of the League is to advocate these values, to influence policy in Europe and to develop best practice through mutual exchange of experience.

Together LERU member universities account for more than 550,000 students, including 50,000 PhD candidates. Each year about 55,000 master's degrees and 12,000 doctorates are awarded at LERU universities. The total research budget of LERU's members exceeds €5 billion. More than €1 billion is granted by research councils, while over €1.25 billion comes from contract research. The total sum of research grants from EU projects to LERU universities is approximately €300 million. More than 20% of ERC grants have been awarded to researchers at LERU universities. Over 230 Nobel Prize and Field Medal winners have studied or worked at LERU universities. 55,000 academic staff and 55,000 non-academic staff work at the member institutions (hospital-only staff not included).

LERU publishes its views on research and higher education in position papers and advice papers. Position papers make high-level policy statements on a wide range of research and higher education issues. Looking across the horizon, they provide sharp and thought-provoking analyses on matters that are of interest not only to universities, but also to policy makers, governments, businesses and to society at large. Advice papers provide targeted, practical and detailed analyses of research and higher education matters. They anticipate developing or respond to ongoing issues of concern across a broad area of policy matters or research topics. Advice papers usually provide concrete recommendations for action to certain stakeholders at European, national or other levels. LERU position and advice papers are freely available in print and online (www.leru.org).

Through sponsorship by Elsevier, LERU is now able to give increased visibility to its views and publications, and thus hopes to even better inform European and national policy makers and other stakeholders.

The topics tackled in this special issue are all high on the agenda of the European institutions, the European Commission and DG Research in particular. For research careers (position paper, see pages 3-34) and doctoral studies (position paper, see pages 35-49), the Commission is presently developing a number of common principles. On social security issues for mobile researchers (advice paper, see pages 50-60) the EU has promised progress in 2011. An eight framework program for research and development (advice paper, see pages 61-73) will be designed in 2011, as will a proposal for the ranking of universities (advice paper, see 74-82). Innovation and research (advice paper, see pages 101-116) is the central theme of the new EU research and innovation roadmap, set out in the Commission's Innovation Union Communication of October 2010. Finally, LERU has addressed two important societal issues, biodiversity research (advice paper, see pages 83-100) and academic freedom as a fundamental right (advice paper, see pages 117-141).

LERU will continue to monitor and advise on EU research & innovation policy in 2011 and hopes to report again in a 2011 special issue of *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*.

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